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### TECHNOLOGY

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IN today's rapidly evolving business landscape, establishing a strong footprint in the digital space has become imperative for businesses of all sizes.

Automation and the Internet of Things (IoT) have increased in importance in many countries, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

This demand can be met through digital solutions, and SMRT Holdings Bhd knows this well. The now fully integrated IoT solutions provider has leveraged its strengths to become one of the leading players in the field.

Group managing director Maha Palan says the IoT landscape in Malaysia is large and the trend of using data to make more informed decisions has been very noticeable over the last decade.

He says as more companies use data analytics to spur decisions, the need for these kinds of solutions is expanding.

However, Palan adds one good thing about the landscape in Malaysia is that solution providers are quite "verticalised".

"Most companies offering solutions tend

to be quite specialised and niche, which has been good for all the players in the industry," he tells *StarBizWeek*.

According to Palan, this is what SMRT Holdings had sought to do back in 2018 when the board decided to restructure and reevaluate its broader strategies.

Since its listing on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia in 2006, the group has undergone several changes.

SMRT Holdings transitioned from HR technology to education to IoT in 2016.

After disposing of its education business and acquiring the remaining stake in N'sairis Technology Solutions, SMRT Holdings knew what it was going to be successful in.

Palan says the group then identified a few key sectors to focus on, namely, the power and utilities sector in both Malaysia and Indonesia. SMRT Holding's target sectors include smart grids for the power sector, water management, and enterprise networking and connectivity.

The in-house team builds general solutions for each specialised area, before tweaking and curating it to fit the challenges that these particular sectors may face.

Palan says, in general, most sectors face similar concerns and SMRT Holdings aims to provide the best possible solutions to solve these issues.

Citing electricity utility firm Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) as one of its main customers, Palan says this is where N'sairis came in as its core business is to manage end-to-end processes for each customer.

"In the power sector, we help them go from being reactive to proactive. For instance, rather than wait for a power outage to take place, the data that is available from customers will be able to notify the power company if something is about to happen. Which means they can start troubleshooting before something goes wrong," Palan says.

A few large retail chains in Malaysia also utilise N'sairis solutions, and this augurs well for the group because most solutions in the market are less specialised.

For the Indonesian market, the group ventured into the financial sector by connecting automated teller machines and banks together.

"Indonesia is an exciting and fast-growing market. They never had fibre, instead they used satellites all along. So to help them move from wireless to actual hard fibre cable has been quite the journey," he says.

N'sairis only broke into the Indonesian market recently, and so far has been successful. The Indonesian division doubled its revenue contribution from 0% to 10% in three years.

As in Malaysia, the state-owned electricity company PLN Indonesia Power has been an SMRT Holdings customer.

Palan says, within the region, there are many developing areas, both rural and urban that have been identified as growth drivers.

"We didn't want to work with partners, but to do it ourselves. We had to learn compliance in how to operate within the local context," he says.

This, Palan explains, included meeting with various authorities in different regions to educate them about the solutions being offered, adding that the goal is to continue the company's fast-paced nature by capturing more market share.

One of the key strategies the group has identified is to build products that have strong capabilities and maintain customer relations.

"What's unique about us is we don't just help people go digital, we also help them run the show. Our job is to manage the data pipeline so they can focus on their core business," Palan explains.

He adds that many of SMRT Holding's customers are recurring and this accounts for 60% of its revenue.

On expansion plans, Palan says they will focus on launching in another country within the region in the next year or so.